Record of the Discussion re Student Outcomes
IEAB meeting 1 DEC 2010

The meeting was observed by Elizabeth Nanas and Ken Stilwell of the Wayne State University Department of Anthropology. These are their notes recorded during the discussion.

Board Member Concerns RE: “Global” Issues:

• There should be at least one course that exposes students to global importance in industry. Having direct experience working with people and organizations around the world indicates that students need exposure to cultural and logistical (e.g., time zone differences) issues before they graduate.
• “When I make a phone call, I want to make it convenient for me. But then I have to realize that there is a time zone issue and I can’t just do everything for my convenience.”
• “Is there an opportunity to work with the diverse populations of the US to get at this?”
• “I think it’s good to address this in terms of the culture of a company itself.”
• “We need attention to cross-functional differences, cross-cultural differences …training that is diverse for students.”

Faculty Discussion of “Global” Issues Concerns:

• The ISE and Dr. Gluesing have been working with Tsinghua University in China to develop a relationship that would allow our students to work with and network with colleagues there.
• Dr. Gluesing is a cultural anthropologist who has been working with the ISE for several years to address these issues and to help students and faculty understand the complexities of this issue. The Ph.D. Global Executive Track (GET) mission is to: provide the opportunity for working executives to combine real-world experience with academic skills to create a new class of technical leaders who embrace integrative thinking, are globally aware, and are capable of producing sustainable value to any organization throughout the world.
• Dr. Gluesing has also been working with ISE faculty to build “global issues” more broadly into the undergraduate curriculum.
• The faculty expressed a commitment to continuously improve the ways that students and faculty address global issues through coursework and research.
• Dr. Monplaisir discussed how the ISE works to address diverse US populations. He said that many students receive first hand experience in working with diverse populations during their one-year capstone research project. However, he also noted that the extent to which any student benefits from this experience can be inconsistent because it depends on who is involved in any given year.
• Dr. Gluesing proposed that the ISE consider changing the objective to read: ‘…high performance teams in diverse environments.’

Board Member Concerns RE: Change Management

• “It sounds like the change management piece is addressed during the senior year with the senior project. But in healthcare, change management is a real issue. It’s not global. But it is a cultural issue within the organization. Going into healthcare you are often put into challenging situations because you are the only engineer—there are a lot of expectations even if you only have a Bachelor’s degree.”

Faculty Discussion of Change Management Concerns:

• Dr. Pichette noted that any student is going to be minimally exposed to organizational culture during the capstone project—if not beforehand. He observed: What we get into in terms of the cultural aspect is, What’s the nature of the change? and, How is that going to have implications for enablers, barriers, and the identities of the change agents?
• Dr. Gluesing added that the ISE works to introduce the idea of implementing change. A part of managing that change means that students need to be aware that they are introducing change within a complex sociocultural system—they have to understand values and beliefs and the contexts of the systems being changed.
• Dr. Gluesing provided additional context. Students are provided with some tools that are really a set of questions that guide students through the process of doing the looking around and knowing how to ask good questions to help them build insight about how people are thinking. Anthropologists think of systems as sociocultural systems. This means that within any given system, you can’t
introduce a change without considering all the parts of the overall system. To graduate from WSU, students must take a course in “foreign cultures.” The Department of Anthropology’s Professor Allen Batteau and the ISE have been working together for many years to put together an upper-level course, The Business of Anthropology, to address these particular issues. These issues are being addressed in many different ways. While The Business of Anthropology course is not a requirement, it does meet an important University requirement—and the course has very high enrollment by engineering students. One struggle for the ISE is that there is no room in the curriculum requirements to create another course requirement without eliminating something else.

- Dr. Pichette raised the concern that it might be difficult to assess what students are learning as the course is offered outside of the department. Records might indicate students are exposed to “foreign culture” but how does the ISE really demonstrate this?
- Dr. Gluesing asked the group what other concerns there regarding challenges that students will have to face. She also asked about the skills that students will need to face those challenges.

Board Member Concerns RE: Coursework

- “Could you explain something about required versus elected courses?”
- “I find that many recent graduates (not just ISE graduates, but all graduates) have to write reports and that their report writing skills are below what we need.”
- “This is definitely important in healthcare considering how much writing is done to help doctors write articles.”

Faculty Discussion of Coursework Concerns:

- There was a general discussion from faculty that students have to take a course that focuses on how to write a business case. They also discussed that there are several opportunities for students to work on writing within the context of their required and elective courses. Faculty did take note that writing was a concern that needs to be more fully examined and addressed.
- Dr. Monplaisir explained that there are a certain number of hours determined by the university for graduation. Students must take a certain number of electives to meet the requirements for the minor. The Business of Anthropology course is one of the electives they may choose.
- Dr. Murat added that the ISE tries to remove as many restrictions as possible to help students have more opportunities. He also noted that there are additional math, science, and other engineering courses that are required. This brought back the issue Dr. Gluesing raised regarding the problem that to require The Business of Anthropology would mean having to drop one of these other required courses.
- Dr. Monplaisir suggested that the ISE closely review the required courses to consider replacing one of these required courses with The Business of Anthropology.

Board Member Concerns RE: Program Objective Timeline, Goals, and Assessment

- “What do you mean by 3-5 years? I don’t expect people to know everything on day one. But I would expect these objectives to be met much earlier than 3-5 years. For example, people should be able to apply tools and techniques within the first year.”
- “And then there’s the issue of how to demonstrate these objectives.”
- “Are we asking the former student to assess themselves? Or, are we asking the employers?”
- “How should we be thinking about expertise or authority? How do we address the issue of preparing students to do something effectively as well as how to teach it to others?”
- “How do we define leadership? Do students have an opportunity to demonstrate this through projects?”

Faculty Discussion of Program Objective Concerns:

- Dr. Murat explained that the 3-5 year goal is dictated by ABET. He agreed that there are some skills that students should be able to demonstrate immediately while other skills need to be developed over 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 years—depending on the difficulty of the objective. He said that the 3-5 year language communicates an aim but that it does not mean students will not have any skills when they enter the job market.
• Dr. Monplaisir added that the ISE has control to define the specifics of what ISE students will do even though the 3-5 years that they need to demonstrate their skill reflects ABET wording.
• Dr. Monplaisir stated that the year-long capstone project is the only place where these issues are currently being addressed in an effective manner.
• Dr. Gluesing suggested that some of these concerns could be built into the internship program.
• Dr. Monplaisir added that the ISE might also be able to effectively build this into the LEAN course.
• Dr. Monplaisir and Dr. Murat discussed assessment as including graduating senior student surveys and interviews as well as employer surveys.
• Dr. Monplaisir and Dr. Gluesing addressed the question about leadership. They agreed that there are many ways to define leadership. In general, leadership can be thought of as knowing how to influence and communicate your vision in a way that encourages and gets people to follow you and to influence their behavior in a desired direction.